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Khalid Sheikh Mohammed: The interrogator who made him talk

A CIA interrogator developed such a rapport with the mastermind of the September 11 attacks that he not only gave up vast amounts of information about al Qa'eda but even began writing poems for his wife.

By Tom Leonard in New York

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Deuce Martinez, a softly-spoken narcotics analyst reassigned to counter-terrorism, astonished colleagues with the effectiveness of his "good cop" routine in questioning Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

Security sources told the New York Times that Mohammed, the self-confessed chief planner of al-Qa'eda's September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, revealed little information under torture until Mr Martinez managed to befriend him.

Mr Martinez had no experience in interrogation techniques and spoke no Arabic. He reportedly turned down a CIA offer of training in waterboarding - the controversial interrogation technique which simulates drowning.

Speaking quietly and patiently, and sometimes bringing his prisoner snacks such as dates, Mr Martinez was brought in after harsher interrogation techniques had been used on Mohammed, an American-educated engineer.

"They'd have long talks about religion", comparing notes between Islam and Mr Martinez's Catholicism, a CIA officer told the New York Times. "He wrote poems to Deuce's wife." Mr Martinez would listen to Mohammed's despair that he would probably never see his children again and his complaints about his living conditions, in particular his lack of a view.

Their relationship progressed to the stage that - according to Mr Martinez - Mohammed would offer key information unvolunteered.

This included his claim to have killed Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal correspondent kidnapped in Pakistan, which Mr Martinez told

colleagues came out of the blue.

Mr Martinez was a specialist in analysing computer data on drug shipments but, aged 36, was moved to the CIA's counter-terrorism operation in Islamabad in 2002.

Intelligence chiefs struggling with their inexperience in dealing with an organisation such as al-Qa'eda, had concluded that searching for drug lords was not that different to looking for terrorist leaders.

After his capture, Mohammed cooperated sporadically with his captors, who believed that he was often giving incorrect information.

However, he talked most freely to Mr Martinez. Colleagues noted that they had a certain amount in common - they were a similar age, they both went to universities in the American South, they were both religious and they were both fathers.

The poetic "tributes" to Mr Martinez's wife, scribbled in ungrammatical English, were intended as a mark of respect to the interrogator, said a colleague.

The intelligence provided by Mohammed was reflected in the report of the official 9/11 commission, which listed 60 occasions on which he provided facts about al-Q'aeda.

Mr Martinez has since left the CIA but now works for a consultancy that advises the agency on tracking terrorists.



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